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BEFORE THE
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
ON
THE STATE OF ALABAMA'S AND MOBILE COUNTY'S PREPARATION FOR
THE 06' HURRICANE SEASON

MAY 24, 2006

Good afternoon, My name is Walt Dickerson. I am the Director of Mobile County Emergency Management/Homeland Security. First of all I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of this committee for providing me this opportunity to represent Mobile County, Alabama.

My Testimony

My testimony today will focus mainly on Mobile County's approach in responding and recovering during Hurricane Katrina. Also, of utmost importance will be addressing the preparation efforts for the 2006 Hurricane Season. Through the leadership of Governor Bob Riley, the State EMA Director Bruce Baughman, and Mobile County Officials, we have a team that continues to address the Long-term issues as a result of Hurricane Katrina, while ensuring we continue to move forward with our preparation for the upcoming hurricane season. Being local government, our position and role as part of the National Response Plan (NRP) is All Hazards Approach with a comprehensive plan to domestic incident management that includes activities involving prevention, preparedness, response, mitigation, and recovery this is essential in protecting

the life and property of our citizens. As part of catastrophic planning efforts we realize at the local level that a potential catastrophic incident could result in a sustained national impact over a prolonged period of time. Therefore, this type of situation will exceed our local response capabilities. Hopefully, the National Response Plan will greatly assist us at the local level if/when a catastrophic event occurs along the Gulf Coast again. One thing we realize in the State of Alabama and Mobile County is that we must have a readiness plan in place that will allow us to function and stand alone for at least 72 hours post hurricane. Not only are we preparing our Agencies and Responders to be prepared for 72 hours post storm, through the Citizens Corps Program and the Community Emergency Response Training (CERT), we are providing training to our citizens for the purpose of having them better informed and prepared for a disaster. Since the devastation delivered by Hurricane Katrina, Mobile County has been working diligently to enhance our comprehensive Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), especially as it relates to preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation. Shortly after Hurricane Katrina made landfall we formed an Evacuation, Logistics, Media/PIO, Search and Rescue, and Mass Care Task Force to focus on improving our capabilities in this area. As a result of this effort Mobile County has improved its capabilities by revising the All Hazards Disaster Plan, purchased 16 generators, organized Shelter Support Teams, we have a plan in place to evacuate citizens without ways and means, upgrading our existing Emergency Operations Center (EOC), conducting continuous training and exercises for responders and officials, upgraded our community capabilities, i.e., through Interoperability, established a dedicated Executive Decision Making Team, we have brought Hospitals, Nursing Homes, and other Assisted Living agencies to the table, we have identified

personnel and equipment shortfalls to the State EMA, we have established staging and distribution sites to handle commodities to distribute to the citizens. Mobile County has taken great strides in improving our capability for both manmade and natural disasters, especially hurricanes. We have developed clearance times based on general population, Special/Medical Needs, Nursing Homes, Assisted Living, and other segments of our population. We continue to make every effort to have a true working partnership between local, state, and federal agencies to maintain an effective Emergency Management Program.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the committee, On behalf of the citizens of Mobile County, I would like to thank you again for your time and would welcome any questions you may have.